

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide, ~~characterized in that the~~ wherein a total mole number of Ce and Zr is at least 85% based on the total mole number of metal in the composite metal oxide, wherein a molar ratio Ce/Zr is within a range from 1/9 to 9/1, and wherein an isoelectric point of the composite metal oxide is more than 3.5.

2. (Original) The cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide according to claim 1, wherein the molar ratio Ce/Zr is within a range from 3/7 to 7/3 and the isoelectric point is within a range from 3.8 to 5.0.

3. (Previously Presented) The cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide according to claim 1, which contains rare earth metal (excluding Ce) in a concentration of less than 15% by mole based on the total mole number of metal in the composite metal oxide.

4. (Currently Amended) A cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide, ~~characterized in that the~~ wherein a total mole number of Ce and Zr is at least 85% based on the total mole number of metal in the composite metal oxide and wherein CeO₂ forms a core surrounded by ZrO₂.

5. (Original) The cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide according to claim 4, wherein the CeO₂ core has a diameter within a range from 5 to 20 nm.

6. (Previously Presented) An exhaust gas purifying catalyst comprising the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide of Claim 1 and a noble metal supported on the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide.

7. (Previously Presented) A method for synthesizing the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide of claim 1, which comprises mixing a ceria sol and a zirconium

compound solution or a zirconia sol to prepare a suspension, and drying and firing the mixture.

8. (Previously Presented) The cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide according to claim 2, which contains rare earth metal (excluding Ce) in a concentration of less than 15% by mole based on the total mole number of metal in the composite metal oxide.

9. (Previously Presented) An exhaust gas purifying catalyst comprising the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide of claim 2 and a noble metal supported on the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide.

10. (Previously Presented) An exhaust gas purifying catalyst comprising the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide of claim 3 and a noble metal supported on the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide.

11. (Previously Presented) An exhaust gas purifying catalyst comprising the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide of claim 4 and a noble metal supported on the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide.

12. (Previously Presented) An exhaust gas purifying catalyst comprising the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide of claim 5 and a noble metal supported on the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide.

13. (Previously Presented) A method for synthesizing the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide of claim 2, which comprises mixing a ceria sol and a zirconium compound solution or a zirconia sol to prepare a suspension, and drying and firing the mixture.

14. (Previously Presented) A method for synthesizing the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide of claim 3, which comprises mixing a ceria sol and a zirconium compound solution or a zirconia sol to prepare a suspension, and drying and firing the mixture.

15. (Previously Presented) A method for synthesizing the cerium-zirconium composite metal oxide of claim 4, which comprises mixing a ceria sol and a zirconium compound solution or a zirconia sol to prepare a suspension, and drying and firing the mixture.